being provided directly on the full surface of the side of said first layer remote from said second film layer by a melt-blown process, said third layer three-dimensionally penetrates the surface structure of said first layer in such a way that the mean spacing D' between said third layer and second film layer is less than the thickness D_{sp} of said first layer sandwiched in between.
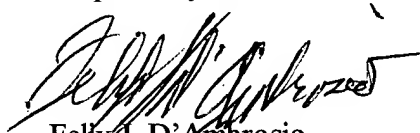
REMARKS

In the specification, page 4, lines 9 and 10, and page 10, lines 1-4, for example, it is stated that the microfiber layer 6 is applied to the staple fiber layer 4 by a melt-blown process.

It is assumed that Terakawa first forms his respective layers first and then laminates them together. There is no teaching of "directly applying the layers by a melt-blown process," i.e., of directly applying the microfibers onto the staple fiber layer by a melt-blown process. Accordingly, and as a further distinction of the invention over the art of record, claim 22 has been amended to bring out this distinction.

The examiner is urged to consider this amendment in her further examination and find claims 22-47 allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

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22. (Amended) A composite material for forming a liquid-retaining layer in a hygiene article or a medical product, comprising:

a first layer of substantially continuous staple fibers with a diameter of 15 to 35 μm;

a second film layer; and

a third layer of microfibers with a diameter of less than 10 μm, said third layer being provided <u>directly</u> on the full surface of the side of said first layer remote from said second film layer <u>by a melt-blown process</u>, said third layer three- dimensionally penetrates the surface structure of said first layer in such a way that the mean spacing [D'] <u>D'</u> between said third layer and second film layer is less than the thickness D_{sp} of said first layer sandwiched in between.